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# GATEWAY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP

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AUG 19 2002

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October 31, 2001

WC DOCKET NO. 02-189

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Mary Alice Upton  
State Bank of Montana  
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Michael K. Powell, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

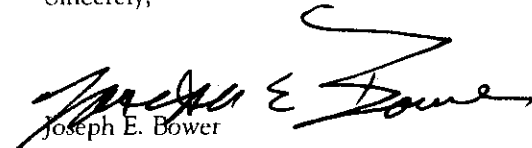
Dear Chairman Powell:

Gateway Economic Development Corporation is involved with developing stronger communities in Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, Meagher, and Jefferson Counties. We usually think our work centers around creating more good paying jobs; however, it also involves building public infrastructure that will provide services wanted by citizens. In both cases, access to affordable and advanced telecommunications infrastructure is critical to the health of our Montana communities.

I recently learned the Mountain View Medical Center in White Sulphur Springs cannot establish direct links with St. Peter's Hospital in Helena because of the LATA restrictions imposed on Qwest. Even though Mountain View is a regional medical center, it needs to manage its finances carefully. Part of their strategy involves partnering with St. Peter's for evaluation of diagnostic procedures. The only effective way of implementing this partnership, especially in emergency situations, is through communication links. Yet, the cost of these connections is unnecessarily high because two companies are needed to provide the service.

I understand Qwest is filing an application with the FCC to gain approval to offer long distance services. This approval is important to Montana because the elimination of LATA lines will provide more competitive telecommunication services. This will help our businesses compete successfully and preserve the financial resources of our non-profits for the delivery of client services. Please review Qwest's application favorably.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph E. Bower  
President

Lynn Robson  
Executive Director

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cc: Rick Hays - Qwest